(f) whether any further reduction in the river width through reclamation would affect the safety of the monument's foundation as per the report of the IIT Roorkee?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (f) As per information made available by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, the Government of Uttar Pradesh had taken up reclamation work in river Yamuna without due approval of the said Ministry.

The matter pertaining to Taj Heritage Corridor Project in Agra is a subject matter of the PIL filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court by Shri M.C. Mehta (WP 13381/84). Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on 16th July, 2003 directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to inquire into the entire issue and the matter is *subjudice*.

Excise Duty on Textile Industry

*32. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Andhra Pradesh Government has suggested to waive excise duty on textile industry to improve competencies-and capabilities to the level of global standards; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Following the receipt of representation from CM, Andhra Pradesh in this regard, a number of steps were taken. To illustrate:

(i) powerloom weavers, having an annual turnover of Rs. 35 lakhs were given excise duty exemption on the unprocessed fabrics for the first clearance of Rs. 25 lakhs;

(ii) manufacturers of readymade garments having an annual turn over of Rs. 40 lakhs were given excise duty exemption for the first clearance of Rs. 30 lakhs during the year;

(iii) substantial procedural simplifications were made for the textile units, which have come into the excise net for the first time:

(iv) facility has been provided to an exempted powerloom weaver to pass on excise duty credit even without obtaining excise registration;

(v) field formations were given strict instructions not to visit any textile unit unless authorized by the senior officers for a specific task. Field formations were also instructed to condone procedural lapses by the manufacturers and traders unless it was done with an intent to defraud the exchequer.

Agreement on economic ties with China

*33. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI:

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister

of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of agreements relating to economic ties between India and China were discussed and signed;

(b) if so, to what extent differences between the two countries on economic ties have been removed;

(c) whether both India and China have agreed to improve economic relations between the two countries and have also decided to help each other on economic development;

(d) if so, whether China has also agreed to provide aid to India for various projects; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) In order to promote trade and economic cooperation, and remove impediments to bilateral trade and investment, both sides have agreed to take necessary steps.

(d) and (e) China has offered buyer's credit from the Chinese EXIM Bank worth US$500 million.

Delay in launching of Varishtha Bima Pension Yojana

†*34. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZIM:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the launch of Varishtha Bima Pension Yojana has been unduly delayed;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.